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Across the Brandwine

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Mythcon 51: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

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The Counsel OF Elrond

Glen Good Knight

Affirming the Images

This issue of *Mythlore* can be called a special Charles Williams issue. Several people in the Society have suggested it, and I wholeheartedly agreed. Williams is little-known in comparison with Tolkien and Lewis. This is due in part to the timing of his death at the peak of his literary career in 1945. No appreciable American following had formed before that time, in part due to the preoccupation of the world with the War. Even in England, in comparison to people like Sayers, Eliot, Auden and Lewis, his following was relatively small. I believe if he had lived longer and finished many planned works in the more developed style he was emerging into, he would be as well-known now as, say, W. H. Auden. In the last few years, his works seem to have undergone a renaissance of sorts. Nine of his works are available in this country in paperback, and his Arthurian poetry, which was out of print for over ten years, has been reissued in England.

The only works by Williams on the "regular" Mythopoeic Society reading list are his seven novels. I feel his greatest achievement by far was his Arthurian poetry. His poetry is not on the list because of its great unavailability in America. Yet anyone who has knowledge of Williams only through the novels is missing many things in the fuller image of the man.

My hope is that this issue of *Mythlore* will stimulate many more people into reading more of, and about, Charles Williams. I would like to try to describe briefly why I find Williams one of my favorite people. He was a tremendous catalyst and liberator to my own thinking, my approaches to life, and my life style. In my editorial in *Mythlore* 5, I told of reading Tolkien as a high school student, and my discovery of Lewis a year later. I did not know of Williams till 1964, and did not read any books by him until 1965. Many *Dimensions* was the first work read, and my initial reaction was not enthusiastic. In comparison to Tolkien and Lewis, Williams seemed very hazy and esoteric. I didn't enjoy the book, but felt I should finish it, and eventually did. Then the book had a different light and was more meaningful, but I still wasn't a Williams "fan." Knowing that C.S. Lewis had written a commentary on Williams' Arthurian poetry, published along with an unfinished manuscript by Williams entitled "The Figure of Arthur," I tracked down a copy. Here I sensed was a side to Williams much deeper than *Many Dimensions*. His Arthurian poetry, entitled *Taliessin through Logres* and *The Region of the Summer Stars*, is very difficult reading, yet romantically rich in luxurious images. There is a sustained sense of underlying joy through the work, even though much of it deals with the fall of the temporal Logres. In reading *The Place of The Lion* next, I found it less puzzling than *Many Dimensions*, and I was growing slowly into an appreciation of Williams. As a young person who didn't have enough background, in either life experiences or scope of reading, I felt I needed some kind of commentary on Williams to help clear up several questions and blank pages I had. Mary McDermott Shideler's *The Theology of Romantic Love: A Study in the Writings of Charles Williams* (which is not easy reading itself) did give the kind of mature, organized insight that I needed. Her book opened up a key to Williams: *The Affirmation of the Images*. Williams himself discusses it in his critical works several times, and his novels and poetry illustrate it profusely. The key phrase of Williams was "This is Thou; neither is This Thou," which cryptically states his view of life as a complementary balance between the Affirmation of the Images and The Rejection of the Images. Williams feels that there are two approaches to life, and that each person follows both ways, with the individual stressing one in preference to the other. The Rejection of the Images is the Way of the mystic, the ascetic, the transcendent. It is the Way that seeks to clear away all objects and experiences that hinder the clear vision of ultimate reality, of ultimate experience. The Way of Affirmation belongs to the poet, the artist, the romantic, the imminent, to those who see the ultimate mirrored in the universe around them. To describe this in religious terms, those who follow the Way of Rejection of the Images desire the direct contact

of God Himself, and to free themselves from all the surrounding distractions. In the words of the mystic soul, it is "the flight of the alone to the alone." Williams clearly points out that this is not a basically negative Way; it is negative only in its rejection of the images. As I stated before, Williams felt both are legitimate approaches, and no individual can be totally exclusive of one way in his life.

When I first came across these ideas, I interpreted them from the context of my own life up to that time. Of a sort, I was following a unhealthy form of the Way of Rejection. I often viewed the colorful parade of life with a singular detachment. Life, culture, civilization, nature seemed to roll along with a blissful obliviousness to the deeper and gut questions that often arise in the mind, both unasked-for and immediately unanswerable. Yet at the same time I knew I had within in me a deep natural spring of romanticism and childlike playfulness. This side of myself was repressed, since I felt it was hopelessly immature, and only tangled my thoughts further in my attempt to apprehend the ultimate. In effect, Williams showed me that romanticism was not to be ashamed of. I could express my previous desire to affirm and revel in the beauty of nature, things in themselves, climates of thought, and especially other people. All things do reflect the ultimate, and by using the Way of Affirmation, seeing the hidden glory glint through the object, one is helped towards a better vision of the ultimate by seeing it reflected in so many things. Each thing only reflects a small part, but opening oneself to the great variety of things - images - one's understanding of the ultimate is broadened in new, unexpected, and surprising ways.

I felt a new "acceptance" or "tolerance" of people - not just an easy going kind of "I'm okay, you're okay" attitude, but something more like "that person is basically (even though I don't appreciate every aspect) good, but he/she would be even more beautiful only if. . . ." I know it is a dangerous thing to claim you are more accepting or tolerant of people. The precise meaning can be so easily misunderstood. I don't feel I can be of much direct influence in changing people for the better. I used to wish this fervently, and at the same time was aware of my own woeful inadequacies. Basically I feel I enjoy people much more now, where before I withdrew from persons I felt I could not agree with. Now people fascinate me as beings in themselves. Whether I can agree with them on all points does not threaten or repel me to the degree previously. As Saint Paul said, "My brothers, I do not consider myself to have 'arrived' spiritually, nor do I consider myself already perfect. . . . But I do concentrate on this: I leave the past behind, with hands outstretched to whatever lies ahead. . . ." I would emphasize my feelings through this quote.

It was the new liberty given me through Williams' explanation of the Way of Affirmation, that especially affected my images of nature and other people. Without it, I surely would not have had the desire or capability to form the Mythopoeic Society, and thus would not have met so many diversely interesting personalities and minds, which have further opened up new insights into so many things and levels of consciousness. It is a very beautiful thing to feel oneself to be part of an ever-expanding positive experience.

ACROSS the Brandywine by Bernie Zuber

Recently I read Charles Williams' *All Hallows' Eve* in order to design a cover for this issue. I knew I would find an inspiring scene in it ever since I had heard Glen read large excerpts from it at his 1968 Hallows'en party. Those of you who were there and remember that late, late reading by candlelight in the attic of Glen's former house may still feel the strange atmosphere of that whole scene. I'm glad I finally did read *All Hallows' Eve* for myself. I find it to be my favorite of the five Williams books I've read. The scene I chose to illustrate is the one in which the dead woman, Lester, sacrifices herself to save Betty from the deadly spell of Simon the sorcerer. It is one of the best-written supernatural scenes I've ever read.

All Hallows' Eve deals with souls in a post-mortem twilight zone and how they progress from that state. After I'd finished reading it I thought about the fact that it is only one of several stories primarily about Death that I've read since joining the Mythopoeic Society. Leaf by Niggle, *The Great Divorce*, *Lilith* and the final section of *The Last Battle* also deal with Death and Life after Death. Does this make our reading matter particularly morbid? I don't think so. I am not brave about the thought of dying so I would not like to dwell on it morbidly but those stories were more uplifting than depressing. Leaf by Niggle was, to me, a particularly cheering allegory of Purgatory and Heaven. This is why I consider it Tolkien's minor masterpiece. With the ending of *The Last Battle* Lewis gives us a similar idea of the joy that Heaven could be. In *The Great Divorce* I felt Lewis was too harsh because just about all the spirits had to go back to Hell. Still his perception of the human spirit was enlightening. *Lilith* was fascinating for its imagery even though I didn't understand all the symbols used by MacDonald. Williams' use of symbolism in *All Hallows' Eve* was more concise and his interrelation of the living and the dead tells more about human nature than some books that are supposedly about real life. I'm referring to the current rash of luridly detailed novels, avidly read by people who would undoubtedly frown on fantasy literature. I've been wondering what percentage of the people in this country still firmly maintain that all ends with Death because there

has been an obvious resurgence of interest in the supernatural. In the March 1970 issue of *Galaxy* magazine I read yet another story of what happens after Death — "The Region Between" by Harlan Ellison. Although Ellison's approach is entirely different from the authors I've mentioned it does show curiosity and concern about the afterlife. Even though many of us wouldn't like to think too deeply of Death we do have an insatiable curiosity about the Greatest Unknown.

The preceding paragraphs were written over two months ago. Various things prevented me from finishing this column promptly and the current preparations for our first Mythlore convention have caused even more delay. I had intended to give a fairly detailed account of the results from the *Mythlore* questionnaire which was sent out with our fourth issue. Its purpose was to find out more about our readers and what they liked or disliked about *Mythlore*. Results are still coming in but, unfortunately, lack of time and space make a lengthy analysis impossible. Briefly then, I would like to mention the more prominent aspects of the results. A strange "generation gap" appeared. Those who answered were either under 21 or over 30! The men outnumbered the women by a large margin but the students outnumbered the teachers by only a very slight margin. Returns were split evenly between California and out-of-state. Most of those who answered have never attended a Mythopoeic meeting and found out about *Mythlore* from various sources, although recent returns are mostly through the Tolkien Society. Lewis and Williams are more widely read than I would have expected and many other fantasy writers are also listed. Although some of those who answered have read science fiction most do not attend conventions and are familiar with only Tolkien-oriented fanzines. All are Tolkien fans, needless to say, even if they don't belong to the TSA.

Mythlore was praised mostly for its illustrations, articles and editorials. Book reviews were well received too. Reaction to poetry, fiction and the letter column was mixed while the Elvish Dictionary was either praised or rejected. Fanzine reviews didn't seem to attract much favor. We were criticized, rather severely in some instances, for the poor reproduction of our mimeograph and lack of good proofreading. The reproduction has been improved by offset printing (though the one person who recently criticized small type won't be happy). The proofreading situation we are constantly trying to improve. And, finally, the lady who asked for more material on Williams should love this issue.

Fantasy books continue to appear in our local bookstores, drugstores and newsstands. The Adult Fantasy series from Ballantine is going strong with several more titles promised for this Fall. You may have noticed that one of their recent books, *Zothique* by Clark Ashton Smith, has a wrap-around cover by none other than George Barr. I recommend the stories in it too. The first one inspired me to do a large illustration which I entered in the Westerncon XXIII art show.

There's a new fantasy magazine coming out this August. It's devoted mainly to fantasy classics long out of print and its title is, appropriately enough, *Forgotten Fantasy*. It's published bi-monthly right here in Hollywood by Nectar Press. I've met both the editors and the publishers and they're very enthusiastic about their publication and also very aware of the need to communicate with their readers. This kind of attitude deserves support and I wish them success.

In connection with an advertisement Berdmans Publishing Co. is placing in our *Mythcon* I program book I've received an advance copy of a book which I think many people in the Mythopoeic Society will want to discuss. It's entitled *Good News from Middle Earth* and it was written by Mrs. Gracia Fay Ellwood who is a member of our Western Marches branch. The book consists of two essays, "Everything is Alive (On Magic in Middle-earth and Elsewhere)" and "The Good Guys (A Study in Christ-Imagery)". At this point I've read more of the second essay than of the first but I can't attempt a review. I will say, however, that you're in for some surprises. Especially when you see those photos in the center section! This large Berdmans paperback sells for \$3.25 and should be available very soon. Reactions should be interesting.



COVER FATIGUE

World of Fanzines

by Alpaipuri

Descending upon Glen GoodKnight's apartment is at best a hazardous adventure. If you are not lost forever among the labyrinthian stacks of old *Mythlores*, last month's *Mythprints*, sticky sheets of mailing labels and piles of half-empty Fresca cans, if you make your way safely through this maze into the back bedroom (the fabled "Pit" of ancient legend), you will find crouching there in the gloomy depths, ever watching, ever waiting, that satanic figure of GutKnecht himself, eyes glinting in demonical glee, lost in his never-ending task of pasting up eight-by-ten-foot pages of *Mythlore* (to be reduced down to postage-stamp size) — and if you are not too careful, he will notice your empty, idle hands and immediately thrust into them an 80,000-word essay on the Jungian symbolism of Bilbo's watch-chain to be typed up for *Mythlore*, or some other arduous task from which, alas, there is no escape save Death itself. . . and I suspect that Glen could find a way around even that. Suffice it to say I have been caught, lo these many weeks, in the web of mythopoeic arbit, not the least of which has been the writing of *World of Fanzines* for this issue of *Mythlore*. Bernie Zuber, the regular author of this column, has been swamped of late with an extraordinary amount of work, only part of which has been the production of the program-book for the up-coming *Mythcon*, so it has come to pass that I have taken over this item for him.

The three fantasy-oriented publications I'm going to cover here are: *Tournaments Illuminated*, the journal of the Society for Creative Anachronism; *Wootton Major Journal*, published by the Brophy Smial of Phoenix, Arizona (now by the Valley of the Sun branch of the Mythopoeic Society); and Greg Shaw's *Best of Entmoot*. This latter item is a collection of the best articles, letters, and artwork that appeared over the years in *Entmoot*, the first fanzine (free, loose, casual) Tolkienzine of the middle sixties. The forty-three page *BoJ* contains: Don Simpson's tenuous mode; a poem calligraphed in said orthography; nine pages of letters from *Entmoot*'s lettercol on the tengwar; Earl Evers' poem "Arwen's Song in Gondor"; an article by Ruth Swaycaver entitled "Aragorn: Myth Hero"; Felice Rolfe on Costuming from Tolkien; a certar (runes) mode by Mark Mandel; page-number conversion formulae for the hardcover and paperback editions of Tolkien's works by Ned Brooks; more letters, this time on Middle-earth music; Banks Mebane comparing the hardcover and paperback editions of *LotR* as regards content and errors; "The Passing of Elven-Kind," a song written in the ann-themath mode by Ted Johnstone; and finally, several more pages of letters from the readers.

The artwork throughout the issue is sparse and not of spectacular quality, although the front and back covers are rather nice — the front, of Bilbo taking Smag in the jewel-filled mountain Erebor, and the backcover a ship at sunset. Altogether it's an extremely interesting fanzine, coming as it does out of the pre-paperback boom era of Tolkien fandom, and all of the material is still quite relevant and intriguing. I am occasionally annoyed/amused when fans write articles and discuss ideas which have been covered already in old fanzines; unfortunately, however, many of these publications are now out-of-print or extremely rare. I am very pleased that Greg Shaw has gone ahead and reprinted the best material from *Entmoot* — he has contributed considerably to the study of Tolkienia; now it's up to Tolkien fans to pick up on his efforts, and not let all this rich material fade into obscurity.

The *Wootton Major Journal* is an odd little beast that appears to be on the road to becoming a quite successful fantasy fanzine. Although it began rather weakly, I thought, with fanish science fiction and poor artwork, editor Steve Armstrong is increasing the quality and scope of the material with each issue. The first *WMJ* contained the first part of a humorous (?) sf short story and an article on the Anthem of Gondor, of interest to Tolkien fans. Number Two brings us such items as strange recipes, the conclusion to that short story, reviews, "A Critical Analysis of Lord Dunsany," another short sf story, a suggested mode for the tengwar (going back to Latin's phonemic system), maps of Middle-earth, Narnia & Prydain, and "a boring and meaningless paper" on time travel.

The third issue (Spring 1970) is a great improvement over the preceding two. It contains: a piece clarifying some points concerning Middle-earth geography; a comparison of Lewis' Oyeresu with Roman deities; a discussion of "Who is the most interesting character in the *Iliad*?" a number of Tolkien's songs set to music by Liz Lane; another fantasy short story; the listing of a number of works of music which Armstrong has set to various parts of *LotR*; an article on the theological history of Middle-earth; speculations on the possibility of time travel; an examination of the certar; and letters. In almost thirty pages there are only four or five illustrations, and the quality is still only mediocre. However the material is quickly becoming more sensitive to other works of literature and to the World in general — I'm almost tempted to call *WMJ* a "mini-*Mythlore*," except its range of subject-matter is broader than this magazine's, venturing into science, science fiction, the classics, and other areas besides just the fantasy genre. What the *Wootton Major Journal* seems to be lacking is the depth of the material that appears in the leading fanzines today. *WMJ* is still only an average quality fanzine, but is worth keeping an eye on for future developments.

Tournaments Illuminated, now, is something else entirely, though it is still of interest to the fantasy fan. Published in Berkeley by the Society